

Abe is taking it on the chin for cent error

By Roger Boye

More error coins are turning up in circulation, this time 1984-dated cents depicting Abe Lincoln with a double chin.

One malformed die created the "funny cents," probably in January at the Philadelphia Mint, experts say. The error is unusual because the doubling is confined to Lincoln's chin, cheek and ear; all other parts of the front side—including the date and lettering—are normal, as is the tails-side design.

The number of such coins in existence could be as high as 56,000, said hobby pro Alan Herbert in a Numismatic News column. If Herbert's estimate proves accurate, this latest error probably would be more common than the 1983 Lincoln cent with double lettering on the tails side, a coin mistake first discovered more than a year ago.

Herbert said collectors may have found as many as 1,000 of the 1984 error cents so far, with some of those coins uncovered in upstate New York and Rhode Island. Experts hesitate to estimate the retail value of those discoveries until a firm market is established: however, a company advertising in the Dec. 5 Coin World is charging \$75 each for uncirculated specimens.

Of course, the price could drop with reports of more finds. Also, some hobbyists suggest that the 1984 error may prove to be less popular [and less valuable] than the "doubled die cents" of 1983, 1972 and 1955, in part because the doubling on the 1984 coins is localized and somewhat difficult to detect.

In fact, the doubling escaped notice at the United States Mint "by people who are very sensitive to errors," according to a government technician quoted last month in Numismatic News. Those mint staffers—as most collectors—tend to examine just the date and lettering for mistakes; Abe rarely gets even a quick glance.

● British one-pound notes are headed for extinction.

The Bank of England no longer will print them after Dec. 31, forcing British citizens to use a one-pound coin that made its debut in 1983. Officials say the move will reduce the cost of making money because each coin should last for about 40 years while the typical bill wears out after just months of service.

Nevertheless, many people have shunned the coin, complaining of its size and rough edges, among other things [two U.S. quarters are slightly heavier than a pound]. The coin is the butt of some jokes, almost as unpopular in the United Kingdom as the Susan B. Anthony dollar is in this country.